

Excerpts From Fulbright Speech on U-2

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Following are excerpts from the speech on foreign policy delivered in the Senate today by Senator J. W. Fulbright, Democrat of Arkansas and chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee:

It is with a heavy heart and with some regret that I present this report to the Senate and thereby to the people of this country. It is never pleasant to admit error in our private lives. It is far more painful for a great nation to admit that its policies have been lacking in wisdom and foresight and one may be sure that whoever calls attention to the errors will not be thanked for his effort.

How, may I ask, can our people be expected to discharge their duty as citizens of a self-governing republic, if they are not told the truth about their affairs? It would be easier, more pleasant, and I am sure more popular, to join those who pretend that all is well, that the summit meeting was a triumph for the West and that the Japanese fiasco only demonstrates once again the viciousness of the Communists.

I believe the prestige and influence of our country on the affairs of nations has reached a new low and I believe that before we can begin to regain our position in the world we must admit our errors, examine the causes thereof, then carefully plan and execute a program for the restoration of that power and influence.

It was a serious error of judgement to order the U-2 flight of May 1. It is true, of course, as Administration spokesmen have repeatedly said, that there is no good time for a failure. But to say this is to overlook the fact that there are bad time and worse times. Little or no consideration was given to the international consequences of a failure on May 1.

It has been argued that in view of the unbroken success of almost four years, there was no reason to anticipate this failure. But, Mr. President, in an enterprise as risky as this, it is imprudent not to take into account the consequences of failure.

Such consequences are routinely taken into account in thousands of decisions in the day-to-day conduct of our affairs. It is only in the case of a major enterprise that we fail to do so.

the United States reaction to the failure which should have been handled differently. The cover statements made about the flight were far too specific, and made us look ridiculous when the full extent of Soviet knowledge was revealed. The gravest mistake was made when the President assumed responsibility for the flight. Finally, after the truth became known, the State Department and the White House assumed a self-righteous attitude which further complicated our situation in Paris.

The crux of the matter is found in these last two points—the assumption of Presidential responsibility and the self-righteous attempts to justify the flights in terms which implied their continuation. These are interrelated and each served to compound the mischievous effects of the other.

As is pointed out in the report, it is unprecedented among civilized nations for a chief of state to assume personal responsibility for covert intelligence operations. The traditional method would have been to allow the chief of the intelligence agency to take the responsibility. One reason intelligence agencies exist is to serve as a whipping boy in cases of this kind.

Reasons for Precedents

Now, Mr. President, I am not so hidebound as to argue that any departure from precedent is a mistake *ipso facto*. We must examine the reasons for the precedents and ask ourselves why, up until the 9th of May, 1960, it had been the unvarying practice in international relations for chiefs of state to hold themselves above and apart from espionage.

These reasons are sound and persuasive and go to the heart of a system of diplomatic conventions which have developed over the centuries and which make it possible for nation states of differing characteristics to carry on amicable, impersonal relations with each other.

In this system of diplomatic forms, the chief of state embodies in his person the sovereignty and dignity of his country. It is totally unacceptable for one chief of state because of his personal embodiment to impinge upon the sovereignty of another, and much less so for him to assert the right to do so.

been more temperate in his choice of language. It is difficult to see how anyone could have been expected to act substantially different from the way Chairman Khrushchev acted under the circumstances which confronted him in Paris.

The Issue of Continuance

Although it was bad enough for our chief of state to assume personal responsibility for the U-2, it was worse for us then to leave the impression that the flights were to be continued. Even more, to go to such lengths to justify the flights.

I am not arguing here that the flights were not justified as an espionage operation, but the justification rested solely and simply on the need of the United States for the kind of intelligence which the flights provided. This is the kind of justification which the Soviet Union, and every other government for that matter, can understand.

But it becomes quite intolerable to go beyond this and attempt to make it appear that the flights were really the Soviets' own fault; that if the Soviets had not been so secretive, we would not have had to spy on them. This attitude of smug self-righteousness must have been unbearably provocative to the Soviet Government and contributed substantially to the violence and intemperate bad manners of their representative, Mr. Khrushchev, at Paris.

I suppose, Mr. President, that this statement will be twisted to have me saying that we must be nice to the Russians and to Khrushchev and not offend him.

The truth is that in the orderly conduct of international relations, one ought not to be either nice or offensive; one ought to be impersonal and objective. Heaven knows our basic differences of substance with the Soviet Union make the conduct of our relations difficult enough without our creating novel obstructions to the traditional means of communication and negotiation.

A More Elusive Issue

But a larger, and rather more elusive, issue is also involved here. It is one thing to say, "We tried to get intelligence, because we needed it." It is quite another thing to say, "We needed intelligence and this gave us the right to get it."

the tool he used. Secretary Herter said it was a convenient handle for him. This is not essentially different from saying he used it as a crowbar and sledgehammer. One might even go further and say that we forced Khrushchev to wreck the conference by our own ineptness.

Another result of this unfortunate series of blunders has been a loss of confidence, world-wide, in the United States. It is true that our allies stood by us stanchly and loyally in Paris. It is equally true that the technical skill demonstrated by almost four years of U-2 flights aroused widespread admiration.

The loss of confidence to which I refer has to do with faith in the ability of the United States to coordinate its governmental machinery and its vast power, and engage this power positively and effectively in the defense of the free world.

Lack of confidence leads to neutralism and I daresay this was a contributing factor to the riots in Japan protesting our new treaty.

It will be a long time before we can get back to where we were on April 30.

In the meantime, if we can disabuse ourselves of the habit of self-delusion, of viewing defeats as victories and of advertising blunders as strokes of genius, there are some things we can learn from these sad events.

One is the need for better coordination and much firmer direction of all governmental activities affecting foreign relations. If this is not to come from the White House, it should come from the State Department.

Much has been said about the lack of coordination in handling the U-2 incident and about the defects in our governmental machinery which this reveals. What is lacking, Mr. President, is not so much coordination as direction. It is not the machinery which is at fault so much as the people who operate it.

The need for coordination varies inversely with the strength and vigor of leadership. Elaborate arrangements for coordination are really nothing more than a poor substitute for a firm hand directing affairs. It is the difference between making a hurried phone call to Gettysburg for approval of a coordinated position and receiving a considered response based upon full and careful consideration from the White House.